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FOL REPEAT LAGOS 13124 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 21 NOV.

QUOTE

S E C R E T LAGOS 13124

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CHEROKEE

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, RH, NI

SUBJ: NYERERE AND OBASANJO ON RHODESIA

REF : STATE 284691

1. I TALKED WITH NYERERE AND OBASANJO AT LENGTH THIS MORNING AT DODON BARRACKS JUST PRIOR TO NYERERE'S DEPARTURE FOR AIRPORT AT END HIS FIVE-DAY VISIT TO NIGERIA. OTHERS PRESENT INCLUDED UNINTRODUCED TANZANIAN (I ASSUME FONMIN KADUMA,) FMG PROTOCOL DIRECTOR BALEWA, MEA AFRICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR AKADIRI, AND GARBA. I USED REFTTEL TALKING POINTS, STRESSING CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT ON AGREEING ON AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT. DISCUSSIONS

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ON THE SHAPE OF SUCH TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE THE FOCUS

OF THE ONGOING GENEVA TALFT RATHER THAN THE DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE.

2. NYERERE SAID HE APPRECIATED AND UNDERSTOOD THE SECRETARY'S RESPONSE. HE THEN PICKED UP QUICKLY ON MY EXPRESSION OF THE SECRETARY'S CONCERN THAT SMITH COULD WELL REFUSE TO CARRY OUT HIS COMMITMENT TO HAND OVER POWER PEACEFULLY IF THE TRANSITIONAL PROCESS IS FURTHER DELAYED. WHILE READILY ADMITTING HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE ORIGINAL TIME FRAME OF "WITHIN TWO YEARS," NYERERE SAID HIS AGREEMENT TO THAT FORMULA WAS BASED UPON REPEATED ASSURANCES BY BOTH THE BRITISH AND THE US THAT IT WOULD BE A "CARETAKER GOVERNMENT" RATHER THAN SMITH THAT THE NATIONALISTS WOULD BE DEALING WITH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. GARBA INTERJECTED AT THIS POINT "THAT IS WHAT SECRETARY KISSINGER TOLD ME IN JULY; HE SAID HE WOULD TAKE CARE OF SMITH." NYERERE SAID HE OBJECTED STRONGLY TO BEING NOW TOLD THAT "SMITH'S POWER" (I HAD MENTIONED SCORCHED EARTH POSSIBILITY) WAS APPARENTLY A MAJOR ELEMENT IN AFFECTING US ATTITUDES ON CONFERENCE TACTICS. HE REPEATED THAT "THE BRITISH AND THE US WERE SUPPOSED TO GET RID OF SMITH." I ASKED WHETHER HE HAD BEEN TOLD HOW THIS WOULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT. HE SAID NO, BUT WANTED TO KNOW WHAT WOULD BE OUR POSITION IF THE AFRICANS SIMPLY DECIDED TO "TAKE CARE OF SMITH IN OUR OWN WAY."

3. I SAID I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY SUCH POSTULATIONS OF SMITH'S DEMISE BUT BELIEVED THAT GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS OFFERED THE BEST REASONABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR SMITH'S SURRENDER OF POWER UNDER ADEQUATE TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS. I URGED NYERERE TO COUNSEL THE NATIONALISTS, IF THEY REMAINED ADAMANT, TO ACCEPT THE BRITISH FORMULAR "WITH RESERVATIONS" OR IN SOME OTHER WAY TO PUT ASIDE TEMPORARILY THE QUESTION OF AN INDEPENDENCE DATE - AND PROCEED WITH TALKS ON THE SHAPE AND COMPLEXION OF THE INTERIM REGIME.

4. OBASANJO THEN SAID "MR. EASUM, YOU UNDERSTAND AFRICA AND AFRICANS - CAN YOU HONESTLY STATE THAT THIS POSITION THAT MR. KISSINGER IS TAKING FULLY MEETS THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE?" I REVIEWED THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY'S DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE, STATING THAT WE SAW IT AS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROCESS RATHER THAN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A SOLUTION. THE SOLUTION, WE HOPED, COULD NOW GROW OUT OF THE GENEVA TALKS. THESE TALKS COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN STARTED HAD THE SECRETARY'S INITIATIVE NOT PRODUCED SMITH'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE MAJORITY RULE PRINCIPLE. I REMINDED

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OBASANJO THAT NYERERE HIMSELF HAD CHARACTERIZED THIS ACHIEVEMENT AS "A MIRACLE." IN ASSENT, NYERERE INTERJECTED, "MR. KISSINGER EVEN GOT SMITH PUBLICLY TO STATE THAT HE HAD NO POWER - THIS WAS A TREMENDOUS ACHIEVEMENT." OBASANJO REPLIED THAT HE NEVER FELT SURE OF THE SECRETARY. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE SECRETARY WAS REALLY UP TO IN SPITE OF GARBA'S SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM. HE SAID THIS WAS WHY HE HAD DECLINED TO RECEIVE THE SECRETARY IN LAGOS (SIC*). EVEN AMBASSADOR

REINHARDT'S BRIEFING, "DESIGNED TO ASSURE US THAT ALL WAS WELL," NOW SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN "A WASTE OF TIME." WHERE WAS THE EVIDENCE OF THE PRESSURES VORSTER WAS SAID TO HAVE AGREED TO EXERT ON SMITH? WHERE WAS THE EVIDENCE OF THE CONCESSIONS ON NAMIBIA OF WHICH THE SECRETARY HAD TOLD GARBA AND THAT REINHARDT HAD EXPLAINED DURING HIS LAGOS VISIT. (NYERERE SUPPORTED OBASANJO ON THIS POINT, SAYING HE HAD IT IN WRITING FROM THE SECRETARY IN OCTOBER THAT VORSTER HAD AGREED TO MEET WITH SWAPO UNDER UN AEGIS OUTSIDE NAMIBIA). OBASANJO CONTINUED "IF THE SECRETARY HAS NOT TOLD YOU AND HAS NOT TOLD US, HOW CAN BE BELIEVE HE WILL MAINTAIN HIS COMMITMENT TO THESE NEGOTIATIONS? HE MUST KEEP THE PRESSURE ON WHILE HE REMAINS IN OFFICE SINCE HE IS THE ONLY PERSON WHO KNOWS WHAT HE SAID TO VORSTER AND WHAT HE SAID TO SMITH. WHAT COMMITMENTS DID HE GIVE THEM?" I REPLIED THERE WERE NO COMMITMENTS, NOR COULD SMITH'S ACCEPTANCE OF MAJORITY RULE AND AGREEMENT TO GO TO GENEVA HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT RESTRICTING KNOWLEDGE OF BARGAINING TACTICS TO THOSE FEW PERSONS AND GOVERNMENTS WHO READLLY NEEDED TO KNOW? I REMINDED OBASANJO THE THE INITIATIVES HAD BEEN BROADLY COMMUNICATED TO AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS AND SPECIFICALLY WORKED OUT IN CLOSE CONCERT WITH FRONT-LINE PRESIDENTS.

5. NYERERE SAID HE HAD ALWAYS INSISTED THAT THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM WOULD BE SIMPLER TO RESOLVE THAN THE NAMIBIAN PROBLEM. HE DEEPLY REGRETTED LACK OF PROGRESS ON NAMIBIA. "VORSTER IS WRIGGLING OUT OF EVERYTHING." AS FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF ERODING SOUTH AFRICAN SUPPORT ON THE GENEVA INITIATIVE, NYERERE SAID HE WAS THUS FAR "UNIMPRESSED" BY VORSTER'S ALLEGED PRESSURES ON SMITH AND WAS READY TO ABANDON HOPE OF ANY FUTURE SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE BY SOUTH AFRICA ON BEHALF OF NATIONALIST OBJECTIVES IN RHODESIA. "SOUTH AFRICA IS OUR ENEMY AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN - I DO NOT ACCEPT THE VIEW THAT VORSTER HAD ANYTING SIGNIFICANT TO DO WITH SMITH'S AGREEMENT TO MAJORITY RULE." I SAID THIS

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DIFFERED FROM MY INTERPRETATION OF RECENT EVENTS. I CITED SOUTH AFRICAN WITHDRAWAL OF POLICE AND HELICOPTER PILOTS FROM RHODESIA AND REFUSAL TO GIVE COMPENSATORY ACCESS TO SOUTH AFRICAN RAILROADS IN THE AFTERMATH OF MOZAMBIQUE'S ECONOMIC BOYCOTT. NYERERE RESPONDED THAT "YOU CAN'T COUNT ON VORSTER TO DO ANYTHING MORE SO LONG AS HIS RIGHT WING CONTINUES TO EXIST." HE SAID HE SHUDDERED AT THE PROBABILITY OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN VOLUNTEERS SERVING IN SMITH'S ARMY IF THE PRESENT STALEMATE CONTINUED MUCH LONGER. THIS WOULD FURTHER LIMIT VORSTER'S OPTIONS. I SAID ALL THE MORE REASON TO URGE THE NATIONALIST LEADERS IN GENEVA TO GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF DISCUSSING THE NATURE OF THE INTERIM REGIME.

6. NYERERE THEN CURIOUSLY SHIFTED GEARS AND IN A SOMEWHAT CONTEMPLATIVE AND WHIMISCAL VSIN TURNED TO OBASANJO AND

SAID "YOU KNOW, I MUST ADMIT THAT I CONTINUE TO VACILLATE ON THIS QUESTION OF LINKAGE BETWEEN AGREED TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND A FIXED OUTSIDE TIME LIMIT FOR INDEPENDENCE AND I AGREE THAT IT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO DETERMINE THE SHAPE OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE." IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION AS TO THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SUCH A GOVERNMENT, HE MERELY SAID, "THE COUNCIL OF STATE IS UNACCEPTABLE; THE INTERIM ARRANGEMENT MUST CLEARLY REFLECT THE MAJORITY RULE PRINCIPLE."

7. BOTH HEADS OF STATE AGREED THAT THE SETTING OF DECEMBER 20 AS A TERMINAL DATE FOR THE CONFERENCE WAS AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD. THEY ALSO CONCURRED THAT IT WAS POINTLESS FOR ARGUMENTS TO CONTINUE ON WHETHER THE FIXED DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE SHOULD BE WITHIN NINE OR TWELVE OR FIFTEEN MONTHS. I ASKED ABOUT THE APPARENT DIFFERENCES ON THE TIME-LIMIT QUESTION BETWEEN NKOMO AND MUGABE ON THE ONE HAND AND MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE ON THE OTHER. NYERERE REPLIED INDIRECTLY TO MY QUESTION BY STATING "NO ONE SHOULD BE FOLLED INTO ACCEPTING ANY ZIMBABWE GOVERNMENT RUN BY THESE TWO REVERENDS -- IT WOULD BE A SILLY GOVERNMENT WITHOUT SUPPORT FROM THE FIGHTERS, AND THE ONLY SOLUTION WOULD BE FOR BRITAIN TO COME IN AND CLEAN UP THE MESS." I NOTED RADIO REPORTS THAT SITHOLE WOULD BE SEEING NYERERE IN DAR ES SALAAM BUT I GOT NO RISE FROM NYERERE.

8. COMMENT: NEITHER HEAD OF STATE RESPONDED DIRECTLY TO THE SECRETARY'S SUGGESTION OF URGENT COUNSEL TO BE SENT THE
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NATIONALIST NEGOTIATORS IN GENEVA. OBASANJO AND HIS STAFF WERE CLEARLY RESPECTFUL OF NYERERE'S SUPERIOR KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE AND JUDGMENT. FOR HIS PART, NYERERE SEEMED PLEASED TO HAVE ACHIEVED A CONSIDERABLE MEASURE OF UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT FOR FRONT-LINE VIEWS FROM HIS HOSTS. I VERY MUCH DOUBT OBASANJO WILL TAKE FORCEFUL LEADS ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES WITHOUT CHECKING CAREFULLY WITH NYERERE. AS FOR GARF, HE HAD LITTLE TO OFFER IN THE DISCUSSION AND APPEARS INCREASINGLY UP-STAGED BY HIS BOSS, WHOSE LANGUID AND STOLID EXTERIOR BELIES A SIMPLE BUT DECISIVE AND DISCIPLINED INTELLIGENCE. AS I LEFT, I SAID I HAD SEEN REFERENCE TO A COMMONWEALTH DEFENSE FORCE. WAS THIS A SERIOUS MATTER? NYERERE REPLIED THAT, WERE THE BRITISH TO TAKE UP THE KIND OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN RHODESIA THAT THEY DESERVED AND THAT THE SITUATION REQUIRES, A COMMONWEALTH DEFENSE FORCE MIGHT MAKE EXCELLENT SENSE. HE THEN TURNED TO OBASANJO AND SAID WITH HIS TYPICAL PIXIE TWINKLE "WHY DON'T YOU RUN IT?" OBASANJO SAID "I'LL PUT GARBA IN CHARGE - THAT WILL GIVE HIM SOMETHING WORTHWILE TO DO."
EASUM

UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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